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The AMERICAN SPECTATOR

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O PROFITEERS!

by ERNEST BOYD

FOR the past year or more the citizens of this great Republic have been regaled with revelations concerning the practices of our leading bankers and business magnates. We have discovered that they do not pay taxes which they can avoid, that they unload worthless securities on the public, that they make illegal use of moneys entrusted to them, that they are as much in the dark as the humblest investor when an economic crisis arises, that their knowledge of the fundamentals of economics is nil. In brief, they have been shown to obey a code which, however legal, can hardly be described as strictly honorable, and to be invested with power and authority for which there is no justification in the actual record of their utterances and activities. In no real sense of the word are they superior men.

In one sense, however, they can claim a superiority over the immense majority of their fellow-citizens: they have made more money. They have displayed a greater sense of the profit motive and have never admitted at any time that a given fortune, however large, was enough for them. If a highly developed profiteering instinct is the mark of a superior personality, the supreme qualification for national leadership, then this country has the leaders which it deserves. It is true that there are Americans who lack that qualification and do not admire it, people capable of and proud of disinterested activity, of the pursuit of some goal for motives not associated with gain. These, however, can hardly be described as more than a fraction of the nation, a minority which miraculously survives in an age which ignores or definitely despises their ideals. Their point of view is not one which perceptibly determines the values held in highest esteem by any influential section of the American people.

Superiority, therefore, being defined as the capacity for making money, the spectacle of a nation pretending to be indignant at the methods of those who excel in this respect is serio-comic. In fact, it might safely be diagnosed as a case of sour grapes. While the indefatigable Mr. Pecora professed to be shocked by the thought of the income tax which the Morgan partners did not pay, for the simple reason that they were not legally compelled to, the redoubtable Mr. Max Steuer evoked cheers from the assembled mob when he secured the acquittal of Mr. Charles E. Mitchell on an analogous charge. Those cheers were a more accurate expression of the fundamental attitude of the American people toward its industrial and financial leaders than the unconvincing indignation of a political lawyer on the make.

The mercantilist philosophy of this essentially, and of necessity, pragmatic country is a factor so deep-rooted and so essentially American that most of us are unconscious of the extent to which it marks off America from all other Western industrial nations. Every American is a potential capitalist, and no party which has blinded itself to this fact has ever recommended itself to more than an infinitesimal fraction of the electorate. A handful of Europeanized intellectuals toy with Marxianism at the moment, as they once toyed with Socialism. The convinced proletarians, those who have class-conscious revolt in their very bones, come from Europe, where class-consciousness, working-class, middle-class, and aristocratic, is and has been for centuries as much an element in life as the air we breathe.

Class distinctions of long standing, accompanied by definite privileges and penalties, are necessary to the development of class-consciousness. Those distinctions are so embryonic and illusory in the United States that only the doctrinaire mind, saturated with borrowed European ideas, based upon conditions peculiar to Europe, can fool itself with talk of the class war. There are only two classes in America, those who have and those who want to have a position determined by the extent of one's acquisitiveness.

Americans who do not fall into either of these two categories are, as has been said, a negligible and rapidly disappearing minority. Their ideals do not weigh either with the haves or the have-nots. Consequently, the struggle between these two is without any ideational significance. Both respect the same values, profess the same ethics, strive toward the same goal. When they fall out, as in hard times, honest men do not, as in the proverb, come by their own. They merely contribute their mite toward the relief of the destitute, thrown by capitalism, in accordance with its logical philosophy, upon the mercies of those who were victimized by both parties when profits were enormous and wages were high.

When the capitalist system is working to its own satisfaction, the community pays all the traffic will bear. When the system breaks down, the community pays for the support of its discarded human tools. That cost cannot obviously, according to the rules of the game, be charged to overhead.

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I COVER THE "WATER FRONT"

by FLOYD VAN VUREN

IT must have been the city editor's sense of humor that led him to delegate me to cover the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union convention. Up until then, if he wanted a feature story on speakeasies or a yarn on "tavern" life since the return of beer, it was always I who was assigned. Then came the good girls of the W. C. T. U., meeting in Milwaukee, of all incredible places for a bone dry organization of that kind to meet, in the year of Our Roosevelt, 1933.

They arrived—some 1,500 of the white ribboned gals—on a Friday. Their convention ranks were cut down somewhat over the attendance last year in Seattle, but that, of course, was due to the depression, according to the high priestess of the organization. It was not because God had not been listening to their prayers, nor yet because interest in their holy cause is waning.

One party of the good ladies, motoring through from some westerly stronghold of the W. C. T. U., stopped over night at Waupun, seat of the Wisconsin state penitentiary. A much disgruntled hotel proprietor, an unbeliever in W. C. T. U. antics anyhow, discovered the next morning that, despite the warning of the grim, gray prison walls, they had lifted the whole two dozen towels with which their rooms had been equipped.

Aside from that, however, their reported misdemeanors were small. True, there was many a bellhop in Milwaukee hotels who waited his professional moment to no avail after taking the babies to their rooms. But there again you have the depression, and no doubt he would have spent their dimes and their quarters—his means of livelihood—for foul beer.

National and state executive officers arrived two days in advance for council meetings. Their first official action was to go to the manager of the hotel which served as convention headquarters and demand the removal of the "tavern" sign just off the main lobby, informing him that they could not be expected to order their meals from menus on which the word beer appeared. Business has been pretty bad, so he acceded.

"With a fighting chance of the drys' winning in twenty states against the organized forces for repeal, we're a long way from admitting defeat!" militant Ella Alexander Boole, Brooklyn, national president, declared in her first official statement.

"What are those states?" I asked Mrs. Boole.

"That I won't tell," she said. "Does a general outline his strategic moves on the eve of battle?"

The girls were ready and willing to talk to the newspaper boys and quite as willing to pose for the photographers.

Mrs. Ida B. Wise Smith, Des Moines preacher, vice-president throughout Mrs. Boole's presidency and elected to succeed Mrs. Boole in the progress of the convention, chose to talk about trips she made into the Bowery both before and after prohibition.

"Before prohibition I had to walk a zigzag path down the Bowery to avoid the drunks," she said. "After prohibition, I sought earnestly to find one drunk, and when I thought I had found him it was only to learn his feet hurt him so much he couldn't help but lurch.

"I think," she continued, "the greatest satisfaction of my life was to step into one of the infamous Bowery dives of old, sit up to the bar, now covered with steam tables, and, with my feet on the rail, order a glass of milk.

"You see," she said coquettishly, "I'm a sport!"

Thermometers were well up in the torrid nineties when the girls arrived and so it seemed proper to ask Mrs. Boole to suggest drinks that thirsty Milwaukeeans might imbibe in place of Demon Beer.

"You might try a combination of sarsaparilla and ice cream," she said. "It's very refreshing and cooling, and not at all like beer, which tends to increase the body temperature.

"Or you might try a mint julep which has ginger ale as a base."

News reel photographers, up from Chicago for pictures of the convention in action, ran into typical W. C. T. U. wrath.

Waiting for their subjects to appear, they stepped across the street and quaffed a few beers. They quietly took reprimands for the smell of beer on their breaths before the girls would pose.

II

The big stage of the convention hall was impressive with its bank of ferns and cut flowers, its profusion of W .C. T. U. banners and good old American flags. The national officers, all in white, looked like bona-fide executives behind an impressive phalanx of desks. They were attended by young girl pages, draped in red, white and blue bunting.

Prayers and a psalm service opened each convention session, the prayers and hymn singing on the occasion of the first session amounting almost to an orgy. The good girls have a profusion of women pulpiteers in their organization and so there was no lack of professional prayer-slingers.

The air of reverence that pervaded the convention was not dispersed even when the lusty throated reformers burst into the W. C. T. U. rallying song, sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic":

See! our banners wave—the whitest
That has ever swept the blue.
And it goes before a willing host
To service kind and true!
Come and join our ranks, dear comrades—
Oh, here's the place for you.

Chorus:

Reach out the helping hand.
Wind the white ribbon 'round the nations,
Wind the white ribbon 'round the nations,
Wind the white ribbon 'round the nations,
The nations of our God!

President Boole's annual address, threatening a third party if the two major parties did not come to dry terms and behave themselves, drew from the audience a rising vote of thanks and a great big cheer:

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AUTHOR IN HOLLYWOOD

by MILDRED CRAM

IT is one of the traditions of Hollywood that only those authors who have failed "pan" motion pictures. Disgruntled playwrights, novelists and short-story writers, defeated by the medium, rush back to New York uttering cries of disgust and rage. The successful ones remain in Hollywood, tradition says, and like the prince and princess, live happily ever after.

The truth is hard to capture. Something happens between the inception of an opinion and its delivery in words. As an author who has labored four years in the studios of Hollywood, I am entitled to an opinion, but I can lay no claim to exact knowledge. Hollywood is not an entity. Neither is it a place. It is a state of mind, composite, many-sided, elusive, actual. I might even stretch a point and call it a psychopathic condition, a definite neurosis. No one, even remotely connected with the making of motion pictures, avoids a touch of this madness. Some escape before becoming completely obsessed. They are the lucky ones. The unlucky ones—those who remain, who expose themselves over a period of years—become, eventually, quite mad. The Hollywood state of mind, at its best, ranks with the more important insanities: dementia praecox, dypsomania, *l'idée fixe*, neurasthenia, or any of the homicidal obsessions.

Strangely enough, as many authors as actors succumb to this curious infection. There seems to be no antidote, save immediate flight. Dorothy Parker fled. In Hollywood, they say it was because she couldn't learn . . . a bright girl, full of quips, but no screen sense. Ha! She had better sense. Like Ulysses, she stopped up her ears and drowned out the siren voices with loud and ribald laughter.

A. E. Thomas came. A sheaf of stage successes to his credit. A first-rate wit. A technician. They gave him an office. They paid him every Saturday morning: such a nice, round check. But they neglected to explain the mystery . . . what is a screen play and why. "Here is a story," they said. "A fine, successful story by a famous novelist. We own it. We paid fifty thousand dollars for it. It won't do for the screen. Re-write it."

So he did. They said, "Thank you very much," and gave him another story, which he re-wrote, with great care and decreasing enthusiasm. No one spoke to him. No one read what he wrote. No one in the studio seemed to have the slightest interest in him, or in the mounting pages of manuscript on his desk. They gave him a third story, reminding him that it needed "treatment." Then, abruptly, recognizing the peril of his situation, he fled to the healing sanity of Rhode Island. Just in time. As Dana Burnet fled from a submarine story, all the way to France. I. A. R. Wylie. Louis Bromfield. Van Druten. P. G. Wodehouse. Locke. Dozens and dozens of others. . . .

Hollywood says—and perhaps Hollywood is right—that screen writers are made, not born. There need be no genius, but there must be an aptitude.

There is no prestige attached to being an author in Hollywood. An author (of standing) in London, in Paris, even in New York, enjoys a certain distinction. He is acceptable. He is even desirable. His opinion is worth something. But when he reaches Hollywood, he finds himself curiously, unexpectedly and completely anonymous. The arrival of Joan Crawford at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios in Culver City is an event. Her lavish car rolls through the gate, onto the lot. Bayard Veiller parks across the street, in Charles Bickford's service station. I may be wrong, but I do not recall ever having seen an author's car within the sacred precincts. I believe the gateman would slam the iron portals in Vicki Baum's face. But Shearer and Garbo are of the elect. So, even, is Jimmie Durante.

This may seem a petty observation, but it must mean something. It means that the author is the most unimportant cog in the Hollywood wheel. Executives, big and little, supervisors, directors, dine aloof from the public gaze in a private bungalow. Authors eat at the commissary, in the company of extras, small-part players, camera men and the boys from the laboratories. The creative impulse, supposed to be so sensitive, is offered no protection at the studios. Authors—I am speaking of them as a class—are given dark cubicles in which to work, nasty little offices furnished in mission oak. Sofas are frowned upon as conducive to sleep. And the walls are so thin that the sound of, say, Edwin Justus Mayer's dictation penetrates with appalling distinctness. Occasionally, an author of unusual fame finds himself in padded quarters, sole proprietor of a vast desk, a secretary and half a dozen ash-trays. As a rule, he is so depressed by this subtle reminder, this delicate insinuation that he is being paid three thousand a week, that he goes into a coma of non-productiveness from which, often, he never emerges.

Writers are supposed to labor in silence, behind locked doors, while the family tiptoes and the telephone is muffled. . . . You remember Conrad's story of the General's daughters who destroyed, with one amiable sentence, the whole structure of "Nostromo." Conrad would have had no sympathy in Hollywood. They would have ushered him down an echoing, carpetless corridor, past doors labelled neatly: Ben Hecht. Charles MacArthur. Anita Loos. William Faulkner. And they would have said: "If such as these can, *you* can!" Conrad, if I know him, would have galloped back to the sea. Or else, challenged, would have entered the cubicle, and there, in a bedlam of whistling page-boys, rattling typewriters, dialect conversation, dictation and pedestrian racket, have wrestled with a "script."

II

"How are pictures written?"

I do not know. After four years spent in writing them, I still do not know.

My first experience should have cured me. I had sold a short story to one of the major studios. They invited me to adapt it to the screen. Talking pictures were comparatively new, and I was supposed to be adept at a certain type of dialogue, which Hemingway calls "cabalese." Succinct. Rapid. At any rate, dialogue adaptable to the modern need for speed and vitality in fiction.

I knew nothing of the form, the parlance; nothing of fades, dissolves, laps, cuts, close and long shots, sound. No one gave me instruction. I was presented to the general supervisor, or associate producer, who was to be responsible for the production. Across his desk were to pass the myriad details of casting, direction, sets, costume, sound, photography, publicity. He was a taciturn, terrifically busy executive. Very charming. Scrupulously polite, ironic and, fundamentally, suspicious. He had never heard of me, and distrusted my ability. It never occurred to him to apprentice me for a few days to a seasoned and expert screen writer. I was told, simply, to *hurry, hurry.*

I turned in my script daily . . . a hash of fiction, play, screen. I used "fades" on every page. I made mistakes that must have struck the supervisor like a blow between the eyes. Yet, laconic and taciturn, he allowed me to stumble through to a last, breathless, triumphant Fade.

Four months later, I saw my picture projected upon a screen in Santa Monica. Nothing was left of the original story save the name of the heroine.

Yet (and this is certainly indicative of something) I had been invited, during the making of the picture, to pose with Joan Crawford on the set. Author and star at tea. Before a battery of baby spots, the "glamorous" actress and her author sat cozily together. Woggles at her feet. Tatting on her knee. Her vast, incredible, staring eyes fixed on my face, while she murmured: "You must tell me about this character I am playing. You created her. I want to *know* her, intimately."

The character, as Miss Crawford finally played her, was created by a screen-writer named Sylvia Thalberg. But *my* name was on the screen.

Just so did William Powell beg me to introduce him to the hero of a story of mine he was to play on the screen. I explained the character, as it had seemed to me, of the strange protagonist of the story: an Irish vaudevillian, a kind of Savoy and Brennan female impersonator, egotistic, vain, cruel, awful, and fascinating.

I went to the pre-view. Powell played an Italian acrobat. Somewhere in "author's row" a story had been lost.

So many people have asked me to explain the processes of adaptation. How a novel, or a play, for instance, is shaken down into a continuity.

At Metro, under Irving Thalberg's régime, the responsibility was shared, as a rule, by a number of writers. He believed in squeezing the fruit dry. Work, under Thalberg, was work. Once a story was assigned, conferences began. Paul Bern was a particularly successful supervisor at Metro. His "story mind" was good. He knew pictures. He also knew Thalberg's tastes and re-actions. Conferences in his office were exciting affairs. The telephone rang constantly. The ante-room was crowded with people anxious for interviews. Technicians came and went. Bern would drop the thread of the story, pick it up again an hour later and go on. If there *was* a picture in a play or a novel, he captured it.

I was called in to write a treatment of the David Graham Phillips story, "The Fall and Rise of Susan Lenox." I was the fifth author allotted to the story. Bern warned me that we had a hard job ahead. King Vidor was to direct. Garbo was to star. It was an important assignment.

We sat in conference for days, for weeks, trying to modernize Susan, to take her out of the depressing, sordid background of the Phillips' novel and give her action, color, story in motion.

Pictures are not books. They are meant to be seen. To be graphic, they may not rely upon dialogue, but must carry to the mind through the eye. Motion. Motion. Never long, static scenes during which one character faces another and converses.

Bern fought for action. For shocking, graphic incident. Vidor wanted pity, humanity, despair and triumph. He didn't care how slow it was, so long as it was real. I wanted a pastoral, with a subtle, evanescent conclusion.

We fought. Argued. Wrangled. For hours the conversation slipped aside from Susan and went exploring . . .

I wrote and wrote.

Late one night, the three of us took the story to Thalberg. He listened, his eyes on a sheaf of wires and letters. When at last we had finished, he said abruptly: "No. You've missed it. Entirely. The formula we're after is this: *love conquers in the end!* We're not interested in defeat—no one is! You've got this girl *down*, but there's no *rise*. Try again."

I was, as I have said, the fifth to tackle the formula. I was followed by *ten others!* One day a short, noisy, dark man invaded the conferences. Mr. Veiller was in. I was out.

A Miss Wanda Tuchok was given screen credit for the final story. I recognized only one contribution of mine, a two-minute scene. To this end I had labored eight weeks. There is something stultifying in such wasted effort. The feeling was that you aimed blindly at a preconceived idea of Thalberg's: you were ghost-writing for a ghost of a ghost!

III

I do not suggest, of course, that every author in Hollywood works like a galley slave, nor do I intend to give the impression that authors in Hollywood are put upon. To the contrary. It is well known how many have drawn fat pay-checks during weeks and months of idleness. "Pictures" have paid fabulous sums for stories destined never to reach the screen. Only the other day I saw a list of un-produced, and probably un-produceable, material owned by one of the major studios. The record filled a sizeable volume—page after page of titles, page after page of short stories, plays, novels, "originals"—most of them the work of well-known writers, few of them likely to achieve the evanescent immortality of screen projection. This list represents the expenditure of a fantastic sum of money, all of which has been received by authors, somewhere.

The studio purchased these stories in good faith, because they were "best sellers," or because someone high-pressured a sale, or because an over-exuberant scenario department believed in them, or because of this or that. Anyhow, the studio owns them. They have passed through the various processes of adaptation and, for some reason, have been found lacking. Stories go out of style as inexplicably as hats. What interests an audience today bores it to tears tomorrow. "Gabriel Over the White House" was so exactly contemporary that certain scenes had to be re-made before release in order to keep pace with the news.

(*Continued on Page 2, Col. 1*)

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AUTHOR IN HOLLYWOOD

(*Continued from Page* 1, *Col.* 4)

The picture reached its public just in time. Six weeks later it would have been an "old story."

Some stories get a head start and then, for unpredictable reasons, hit snags and break up in writing or, even worse, in actual production. "Rasputin and the Empress" was such a one. The day it was finally finished there was loud revelry in the studio. Everyone felt as if the missing piece in a giant, idiotic jig-saw puzzle had been recovered and fitted into place.

Other stories—and these are the tough ones—"read" like silk and then defy adaptation. The harassed writers who tackle the job discover, too late, that "style" has concealed a lamentable lack of plot. There *is* no story. And it is one of the credos of pictures that the cinema addict craves a narrative, be it ever so slight. The exceptions, experts argue, only prove the rule. Murnau's picture, "Tabu," was strung upon a mere thread of story; the director and the camera-man made drama out of bodies in ecstatic motion, out of shadows and clouds and simple, unpremeditated gestures. There was no "problem," no psychological method, neither complexity nor interpretation. When King Vidor approached the same thread of story in "Bird of Paradise," he made the mistake of fabricating a plot with which to placate his audience. Love, in Murnau's picture, became sex in Vidor's. Fear in Murnau's picture became Menace in Vidor's. Murnau had given us innocence. Vidor gave us nudity. A mere shift of attention. Vidor was under the strong impulsion of an obsessing idea. Hollywood still insists: there must be Plot.

To this end, authors from all over the world have been summoned to Hollywood. Beginning with the highly publicized Famous Authors of silent days, a steady stream of literary notables has filtered through the studios, and out again. They were supposed to write. They were, in fact, paid to write. In the presence of notaries and agents, they affixed their illustrious signatures to complicated agreements, dedicated their genius to a Company, swore not to plagiarize, and to write and re-write, if requested to do so, time without end, until the results of their labor were "accepted and signed for."

Most of these men and women failed to adjust themselves to studio conditions. A few of them were frankly out to fleece the producers, if they could. A handful remained, to grow up with the industry. They are the "old masters" of today, who recognize the limitations as well as the possibilities of the medium and, with a critical tongue in the cheek, do the best they can.

Around them, crowding them out as time passes, there is a group of studio-trained writers. These people aren't contemptuous. They aren't bewildered. They were born (artistically speaking) in Hollywood. Whereas the established novelist or playwright finds himself, at the beginning of his picture contract, on unfamiliar ground, the studio writer already knows the game inside and out. He has gone through the mill; he is on speaking terms with the camera, the microphone; he has already learned the argot of supervisors, directors, sound mixers, players, agents, costumers, technical men; he can find his way around. He knows what to avoid. What pictures have been "box-office." He knows the whims of his producer. He is in contact with the mysterious currents of gossip and conjecture—who is "in," and why.

It is no trick for a trained writer of continuity to turn out a workable script in half the time allotted to a "famous author." The latter, in spite of himself, is apt to work in terms of the theatre until he discovers the tricks of the new trade—how to turn a sequence on sound, how to "cut away" from a scene, how to reduce dialogue to a minimum, how to catch the elusive and vitally important "tempo," the beat and measure of a good picture. The writer trained in the studio carries this "beat" in his head. He is like the composer who "hears" an orchestra mentally. The newcomer, unless he is divinely flexible, must undo his technique—be it that of novelist, biographer, playwright or poet—and weave new patterns with new threads.

Studio executives have been patient in their dealings with the novice. Often too patient. I have heard writers complain of being let alone, when they really wanted instruction.

"If only they'd send in a trained continuity man to show me how the game's played! All I need's a little guidance! Someone to explain the technique, to save time and nerve-strain! Or, if they won't do that, why not let me have a heap of scripts—good scripts—to study? But no. . . . they give me a story and tell me to go ahead and make a picture of it. Then they leave me. I don't know what to shoot at, and that's a fact."

R. K. O. officials told me, with great pride, that Wilbur Daniel Steele was at work in their studio. When I gasped, and wondered how such a fine style could be captured for the screen, they said he wasn't being hurried, or harassed or interfered with. If it was true . . . if Steele is to be given time to study the medium, and to find himself in relation to it . . . if he is allowed free play within the essential confines of this new art . . . who knows what the result may be? The man who wrote "Conjuh" may find a way of supplying the cinema addict with stories so different, so exciting, so tremulous with life and beauty that empty theatres will fill up again.

The fact remains that unless some author, soon, does just this, the responsibility will pass to the director. In which case, a new type of director must be produced by the emergency. He must be both author and director, capable of improvising dialogue as he goes along, if necessary. He will get his story as one captures a butterfly in flight . . . it will flutter in his hand . . . he will hold it captive a little while, photograph it in all its attitudes, then let it go . . . alive.

The trouble with most screen stories today is that they have been captured alive, then chloroformed, then embalmed, and at last exhibited—like the rouged cadaver of poor Caruso—behind plate-glass.

IV

You hear much talk of "formula" in the studios. Conferences consist not of progressive discussion, but of reassembling. You are, let us say, writing a scene of seduction. Someone reminds you of the great seduction scene in "The Guardsman." Formula Number Eighty. Or someone else calls your attention to the sure-fire seduction in "Red Dust."

"They like 'em strong, fundamental, earthy. The anemic heroine is out. Let's write this straight from the shoulder—maybe with a laugh—you know, like that scene in 'Farewell to Arms,' where she laughed at herself. That was a wow. People loved it!"

Presto, your seduction scene is a patchwork of the best seduction scenes! Formulas eighty to nine hundred, inclusive! In its progress from the scenario department to the screen, a play is passed through, not one, but dozens of intellects. It is analyzed, dissected, minced, tossed about until it loses all semblance of its original self. And in the rare instances when a scenario-writer has the good luck, and the good taste, to keep the original manuscript more or less intact, is he complimented? Not at all! Ask Horace Jackson, who preserved Barry's "Holiday" and "Animal Kingdom" for screen audiences. He is popularly supposed to have tossed off these adaptations before breakfast.

I met the adapter of a story of mine on the lot not long ago. I shook his hand and complimented him on what I had heard was a skilful piece of work. The picture had had its initial preview at Santa Monica and a powerful screen executive had been seen to weep. The audience had been given report cards upon which to write their honest opinions of the show, and I had read these with delight and gratitude. "Thank you so much," I said to the screen writer. "I can't tell you how—"

"That's all right," he interrupted. "It was a good story. A swell story! Why, do you know, every little while, when I was writing it, I'd go back to your original, and almost every time I'd find the idea I was looking for. The start . . . the stepoff! I used a *lot* of your stuff!"

The adapter was being generous, modest to a fault. I was the one who erred. I should have known that no story can come unchanged through such an experience. The system, not the screen-writer, was at fault. My story had passed through half a dozen typewriters. The heroine, when the final adapter inherited her, was once more the familiar "composite formula." She annoyed the audience, and, in spite of an expensive producer, a great star, Adrian's costumes and excellent direction, the picture flopped. I maintain that had one writer seen it through from start to finish, it might have succeeded. The screen executive's tears, the complimentary remarks of a preview audience, were "Hollywood reaction." In the vast provinces, the evasions and half-truths were recognized and booed.

In view of all this, how, you ask, do good stories sometimes reach the screen? There is no answer, unless it be hidden in the mystery of the "lucky break." The right author, the right director, the right star—or all three. No stupid interference. No routine supervision, which is so seldom "vision" and never, by any chance, "super." Some obscure alchemy produces the right combination. It should happen oftener. That it does not is the direct reason for deserted picture theatres and for the complaints of picture-goers.

Let us examine the actual process of manufacture.

V

Every studio has its own method of buying screen material. The scenario department, under the supervision of an editor-in-chief and his assistants, is equipped to comb through every issue of every magazine, every publisher's list, every newspaper, in the search for suitable stories. Scouts (often the executives themselves) see every play that is produced. A staff of readers examines every original manuscript received.

These readers prepare short outlines. In case a story has unusual possibilities, it is brought to the attention of the scenario editor. If he is impressed by the outline, he reads the manuscript itself. Very rarely (because good ideas are scarce) he brings the story up at one of the weekly conferences, states his reasons for believing it to be potential screen material and if the re-actions of the others justify his urging its purchase he does so.

Suppose the story gets this far. It goes next to the producer himself. A treatment is made, probably by a staff writer. This eventually reaches the Chief's desk. If he likes it, he may discuss it with his associates and get their reactions. If he then decides to buy the story, the author is approached, a price fixed upon and the deal closed. Then what happens?

A supervisor is assigned. He is responsible for all the details of production. He may choose the writer who is to turn out the finished screen-play. Conferences begin. When the writer is through, a director is chosen. Then a cast. The scenic and costume departments begin to hum, the wheels of production begin to turn. The story is fed, page by page, into the machine.

There is a pre-view. Cuts. A first-night showing. The publicity department leaps into action. The picture is launched for better or for worse. Altogether, dozens of people have had a hand in the final result. Each one has left a thumb-print on the Idea. No wonder the author has difficulty in recognizing his brain-child! Often it frightens him.

Several of the studios print "confidential bulletins" containing short outlines of stories recommended by the scenario department. These bulletins are distributed among the members of the staff. The idea is to obtain unsolicited criticism. Favorite stories are often reprinted, in an effort to force purchase.

Established writers are, as a rule, represented by agents, expert contact-men who maintain offices both in New York and in Hollywood. These agents are supposed to be familiar with the story requirements of every studio. They know when a "Chatterton" is wanted. When there is a crying need for a "Barrymore." Who wants a comedy. Who is ready to buy a "gangster" or a "war" or a "comedy-drama." The agent, for a consideration, makes the necessary moves, and brings his client's story to the right producer at the right moment—if he can!

This system is ardently supported by some, despised and reviled by others. There has recently been talk, in Hollywood, of doing away altogether with authors' representatives, and establishing a central bureau, very like the Central Casting Bureau, to handle authors without benefit of agent. This would work out something like this:

Paramount Studio calling:

"We want a blonde authoress, weight one hundred and twenty-five pounds, to report Wednesday at nine A. M., to write Scene 198 into Script 000. Price ten dollars."

It wouldn't work. Reason it out for yourself. Authors can't be summoned, like extras, to produce comedy, tragedy or adventure on demand. If literary ideas could be tapped as easily as this, office-boys would write all the scenarios. Unfortunately for the studios, writing is not altogether a trade. It cannot be taught. It is, like all afflictions, a personal thing.

In reaching out through the civilized world for stories, the studios of Hollywood have left no stone unturned.

Save one!

They have not yet thought to capture an author, to pay him a moderate sum, to give him instruction in screen technique, and to leave him alone until he has wrought a screen play . . . a dozen screen plays. Then to discuss, improve upon and produce his efforts. Then to pay him a percentage of the profits. Thus to stimulate his interest, his ambition and his creative impulse. To cater to his pride. To add to the lustre of his name. And to keep him—a contented author—within the fold.

The "system" has destroyed the very thing it set out to foster.

THE ECLIPSE OF DINNER

by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

THAT the once proud institution of dinner is rapidly vanishing from American life is each evening being borne into the increasingly disturbed consciousness not only of the true connoisseur but of the generality of more sensitive palates. To the vanishing, many things have contributed.

Dinner, in any sense above the peasant level of corned beef and cabbage, is not a matter of food alone. Leisure is as essential an element to it as haste to a race horse. The finest dinner ever served to mortal man would be a complete failure if but half an hour—even a full hour, indeed,—were available for its delights. Time and tide may wait for no man, but it is imperative that they wait for the glorification of the chef. There was a day, say fifteen or twenty years ago, when dinner in America was paid its chronological due. That day has gone. It has so far gone, in point of fact, that even what is known as a formal dinner currently finds its personages restive if more than an hour is consumed in its service. Dinner, in reality and by rights a gustatory gala, has descended to the mere degraded level of a social function or an insistent and undiscriminating stomach.

Any dinner that may lay claim to being a dinner must obviously be served promptly. Yet the leisure that we deny to the dinner itself is dissipated aforehand, to the complete ruin of the dinner and of the chef's equanimity. A dozen guests are bidden to dinner at eight. The host or hostess, aware of the local posturing custom of tardiness on such occasions, has duly stipulated to the kitchen that service shall not begin until eight-thirty. Yet the host or hostess is fortunate if all the guests have arrived by a quarter to nine. The dinner, of course, is a wreck. That is, it is a wreck to anyone with a regard for good food well prepared and accurately timed as to service.

The killing of time while waiting is commonly negotiated with anarchical cocktails and a multifarious assortment of canapés. No true gourmet, of course, can conceivably condone such a tipple as a cocktail before dinner. The cocktail, on its epiphany, began to sound the death knell of the dinner in America. The increasing habit of drinking not only one but two and even three cocktails as a prelude laid the American dinner in its grave. And the coincidental habit of nibbling four or five different kinds of canapés reared aloft the final tombstone. When the guests at the average dinner in our midst eventually sit down to table they are so full of stuffed olives and curled bacon, grated cheese and chives, peanut butter, sardines, tuna fish, chopped eggs, and anchovies—to say nothing of gin, vermouth, bitters and lemon peel—that dinner is a redundancy.

That, since 1919, the absence of appropriate dinner wines has further corrupted all pretense to sound dining is too generally known and admitted to call for repeated notice. But even were the wines available there are probably not more than a dozen men at most in all America today who know their proper disposition. One such is Mr. Lawrence Townsend, formerly of the American Diplomatic Service and one of the few connoisseurs not only of wines but of foods left in the length and breadth of the land. In order to settle quickly the point as to the proper service of wines at any dinner worthy of the name, I append the names, vintages and sequence of those set out by him at his board:

Amontillo Sherry, 1868.
Moët and Chandon, 1893-1911.
Château Latour, 1893.
Mousigny, 1879.
Château Yquem, 1883.
Porto, 1861.
Fine Champagne, Voisin, 1848.

That the dinner of the past is a thing of the past and the dinner of the present a mere makeshift is nightly impressed upon the more sophisticated diner-out when he contemplates the table scene before him and reflects on its counterpart (to misuse a word) in the heyday of American dining. The dinner that one is served today has so little variation that it has become a stencil, and is immediately recognizable. First, half a chilled grapefruit adorned with one Maraschino cherry. Second, a cup of consommé Alphabet. Then a small piece of nondescript fish with three small potato-balls covered with butter and parsley. Now a bleak squab, some string beans and maybe a few mayonnaised asparagus. Next a salad of lettuce, orange, pineapple, another Maraschino cherry and—as God is in his Heaven!—a dab of whipped cream. Finally, a great hunk of ice-cream covered with a strawberry sauce, and coffee. And all to a counterpoint of nibbled peppermint candies and salted almonds. "No, I can't agree with you about D. H. Lawrence"; "Yes, Lunt and Fontanne are wonderful actors"; "The market may go up and then again it may go down"; "I prefer the *Ile de France*";—and the curtains of memory part and reveal the dinner table of another time and another America:

First, hors d'oeuvres (served at table, where they should be served, and not in the drawing-room). Next, consommé Renaissance, or à la Sévigné, or Royale Printanière, or Sultan, or Impérial, or à la Daumont. Next turbot with sauce Hollandaise or Nantua, or timbale of sole à la Joinville, or grilled fillet of trout, or fillet of salmon à la Morlay, or terrapin Maryland, or redsnapper à la Venitienne. Then, fillet of beef Renaissance, salmis of pheasant or pigeon, duck à la Périgueux—take your choice or take all. Now, foie gras à la Française, and then a simple lettuce salad—no Maraschino cherries, no orange slices, no whipped cream—and perhaps a few cold asparagus. Finally, an ice—a simple ice—and coffee.

Have I overlooked something? I have indeed overlooked something, and not the wines—which are to be taken for granted—either. The sherbets! Dinner without a sherbet, in the days of civilization, was unthinkable. A sherbet Paradis, a sherbet à l'Ermitage, a sherbet à la Romaine—how the mouth waters in recollection. I quote from one of the greatest epicures of that American day: "Then your *sorbet* . . . which, as it is an ice, produces on the mind the effect that the dinner is finished, when the grandest dish of all the dinner makes its appearance in the shape of the roast canvasbacks, woodcock, snipe, or truffled capons, with salad!"

II

Contributing further to the decline of the dinner in America is the change that has come over servants under the more recent manifestations of the national democracy. In the youth of the present host or hostess, servants were servants, and were content to remain servants. It was not an unusual thing in those days for a cook or a butler to remain in service with the same family for life. The kitchen, presided over by the cook, gradually

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EDITING THE EDITORIALS

by FLOYD TILLERY

LONG before the press of the nation had scareheaded the synthetic conception of Little Nira, I was doing two six-hour shifts a day and living on nothing a year: teaching school in a closed southern cotton mill town, trying as best I could to precipitate a crop of young politicians who might solve the sundry problems of the slavocracy. But when I saw by the papers that the Democrats were destined to sit their problematical mount for four years, I turned my attention to the ambitious task of trying to teach my classroom charges to think straight, and to express their thoughts simply, directly and forcibly. Anyone, I think, who would take the time to examine the textbooks with which I was supposed to work, would agree that this last high purpose of mine was pretty quixotic.

But one day an Angel of Light appeared to me in a vision, stating that I was transgressing the laws of reason in expecting these pupils of mine to be interested honestly in the erudite or archaic literary models of Addison, Carlyle, Hawthorne, Pater, Stevenson and Paul Elmer More. Whereupon I confessed my folly and, begging an indulgence, was told to turn to the simple editorials of the newspapers and read, read, read. There—if I wished to convince the members of my classes that "all standard writing is clear, effective, and gramatically correct"—there would be found the *ex cathedra* proofs.

Straightaway I began to obey the divine command. And, to motivate the work before me, I announced in the schoolroom that on all monthly English grades one point extra credits would be given those who would hand in errors of grammar, rhetoric, composition or diction detected in the editorials appearing in the daily papers. Pretty soon, as a result, the laugh was on me; for, in less than a week, practically every pupil in the English department had been credited with enough bonus grades to enable him to pass his particular subject that month without further study.

I had supposed that the articles written by the state newspaper editors could surely be studied by high school boys and girls who might be desirous of perfecting their own skill in language and composition. But the boys and girls themselves soon discovered for me that many of the paid illuminati of the press are often too careless or too indifferent to express themselves either clearly or effectively, and that frequently even the very grammar of some outstanding editor is worse than lower sixth grade.

Such was my disillusion after my first experience in trying to read critically, from a grammatical and rhetorical viewpoint, editorials appearing from day to day in the more prominent newspapers published in the South—and I nothing more than a damn-fool, unpaid pedagogue, teaching school in a closed cottonmill village. Perhaps, however, I reflected, it was unfair to judge the national press by the writings of the editors employed by the publishers of the dailies in the Shoeless South. Whereupon I cast aside my student collection of prize specimens—the local variety—and sent a five-cent stamp to fifty of the leading newspapers of the United States, asking that a copy of any edition be mailed to me. Speedily the samples were sent; and when school was out, I began reading something infinitely worse, I should think, than Mr. Dick's History of the World.

But, as I read, I kept my eyes on the lookout only for such errors as the textile town boys and girls I have referred to are capable of detecting and correcting, so that the specific "violations" which I have noted as illustrations are directly comparable to those that the pupils themselves "spotted" for their extra English credits.

The exhibits are herewith displayed:

II

Under the caption, "Crawling A Rope," in the New York *Evening Journal*, we find the following: "The picture at the top shows a 'bridge,' now existing across the Upper Nam Tamai River, in Burma. Look closely and you will see one of the natives of this part of the world, a Daru, inhabiting the territory known as the 'Unknown Tringle,' crossing a bridge. Here you see the beginning of what is now the gigantic suspension bridge with thousands of automobiles crossing it every hour. Today, with all our achievements, we are only twelve thousand years from the late Stone Age, when men's tools were made of stone, and they possessed practically nothing of what we possess today. What will be done in the next twelve million years when science, physicists, chemists, astronomers and geologists assure us the sun will continue to warm this earth?"

Are we expected to see thousands of automobiles crossing the *beginning* of what is now a gigantic suspension bridge, or a suspension bridge itself? As a matter of fact, there isn't a single automobile in the picture. Was it the men's tools or the men themselves that possessed practically nothing? Of course, one can guess, but should one have to? And is "science" a professional person to be opposed to chemist and geologist, or is science "systematized knowledge"?

But let us dispense with rubberneck-bus-guide amplifications and permit the reader to take a running glance at other curios, with just a slight notation here and there.

From the New York *Times*: "No one should go into the woods without compass, Geological Survey maps, a waterproof matchbox and a hunting knife or hatchet. Other hazards are poison ivy, sumac and oak, and venomous snakes." . . . "Subject to one important proviso, four of the principal wheat countries have agreed at London to attempt to control its production and export." . . . "All kinds of magazines have felt the stress of hard times, though the news stands still keep a brave front, and some have had to suspend publication." . . . "While statesmen are bargaining together for armament reduction and peace treaties men who ought to know better are reasoning logically from ignorance and drugging themselves into a helpless frame of mind."

In its appeal to the public not to "strangle teachers to save schools," the Chicago *Herald and Examiner* argues: "Having spent most of their lives in making school teachers of them-

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THE WORST BOOK OF THE MONTH

DANTE VIVO

By Giovanni Papini.

4½ x 6¾. Pp. 450. L.16

Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina.

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EDITING THE EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 2, Col. 4)

selves it is almost inevitable that they will keep on teaching school. . . . It is easier to pick their pockets than to try to take any money away from hard-headed business men. But there are a million people in Chicago who still have twenty dollars apiece. They will tell you they do not want it taken out of the school teachers' pockets or out of the future of the children."

The Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, in boosting its exposé of Washington lobbyists, says: "Is there any wonder that the wavering Congressmen, constantly beset by the 'locust swarm,' doubt their own convictions or even lacks them entirely?" And the Detroit *Times*, in its thrust at the R. F. C., declares: "These local agencies, in touch with actual conditions, know that employment conditions have grown worse instead of better as the country has been confused with half-hearted measures for financing the financier, instead of for re-employing the idle." While the Los Angeles *Times*, in denouncing certain local extravagances, proclaims: "This is not the only example of duplicated activities in the county service, and the rest of them must be ended in the same way."

"Morse's invention of the telegraph was his greatest scientific contribution to human society, but he was a man of parts." (The Boston *American*.)

"Of all the miserable circumstances surrounding the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, the murder of the child and the various efforts to extort ransom, successful and unsuccessful, the most despicable was the action of John Hughes Curtis, who concoted monstrous lies designated to create the belief that he was in contact with the kidnappers and that he could effect and bring about its rescue." (The St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*.)

"This will be true since the Government Printing Office prints such things for Congressmen at cost. But they will be carried in envelopes furnished at Government expense." (The Baltimore *Sun*.)

"English women have been recognized as of high color, that is said because of the cool, moist climate." (The New Orleans *Times-Picayune*.)

"A plane is as natural an object in the sky as a bird. Their taste is bound to be different; but then the writers have a different environment too."

"We might well imitate the Grand Rapids plan, where a central store, owned and operated by the city, buys provisions. They congregate at the store every day, obtain their food in an orderly manner and one policeman on duty rarely has anything to do."

"It must be remembered that neither body is now a 'church.' It is only a collection of separate churches working together."

"Ohio would have been placed in the embarrassing position of having on its hands one of the most beautiful edifices in the nation which was useless."

These four last excerpts are taken, in order, from the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the Indianapolis *News*, the Providence *Journal*, and the Columbus *Dispatch*.

The Memphis *Commercial-Appeal* thinks that "The bread lines in some of our cities is a standing advertisement for the agrarian."

The Portland *Oregonian* argues: "Congress should adopt a policy that will encourage private interests to give continuous jobs to the unemployed."

The Birmingham *News* declares: "It is very sorry sportsmanship, in times like these when Birmingham merchants are having a terrible time meeting their rental obligations, their tax and license obligations, and all the while trying to maintain their staffs of salesmen and saleswomen and to save them from the tragedy of unemployment, when Birmingham residents give ear to the blandishments of salesmen with stuffs bought from other cities."

And in one clear-cut sentence the Atlanta *Constitution* whoops: "Instead of aiding the cause of temperance by its departure from its chosen paths, the country is now more liquor laden than ever in its history."

SERVANTS OF GOD
No. 16

From the Cleveland, Ohio, Plain Dealer:

DES MOINES, IA. (AP)—An Evangelist—who said he was Dr. Charles Arthur De Bussy Hetherington—was arrested here tonight on charges of stealing Bibles.

The Editors, nominating themselves members of the Brain Trust, take the liberty of suggesting a Federal tax on the income from blessing automobiles.

THE NEW LEISURE CLASS

by R. S. RABBITT

I AM a fugitive from the platitudinous ponderosities of my elders and betters. I enjoyed the good fortune of being born during the panic year of 1907, and no doubt my mewling was interrupted by relatives and friends cooing, "The banks are essentially sound", into my uncomprehending ears. I took my first steps into the American system of schools during the sag of 1920, and I seem to recall my adolescence being punctured with the words, "This is just a temporary condition due to the war." And finally, in 1932, I flowered into the official collegiate conception of an educated man to the tune of "Conditions are better now—a new deal—a new deal—a new deal."

And, today, I find myself a member of the new leisure class, a position which I had never expected to attain until much later in life. Approximately fifty per cent of my classmates—forty per cent having decided on more school—join me in my leisure, which is not exactly the paunchy complacency of the man who has made his pile. We are a motley crew, numbering in our ranks the young gentleman who sits and reads the current best seller in the Park Avenue apartment of his parents, as well as the poor devil who sits on a park bench and picks newspapers out of rubbish cans in the hope that he may find something in the want-ad. section. The only thing that we seem to have in common is our uncertainty and our bewilderment as to where we fit into the scheme of life.

All of our professional sages and journalistic philosophers, writing in current periodicals from time to time, seem to be congratulating us on the splendid opportunities we have for reading and studying in our leisure time so that we may become more cognizant of what ails the world. Like so many Buddhas, we may sit and contemplate our collective navels in a search for the great truth of what's wrong with this picture which we call the world. All sorts of panaceas are offered, and we may study our Communism, our Technocracies and our dynamo dollars until we are fit clients for the madhouse. Oddly enough, the popularity of jigsaw puzzles is at the same time growing in leaps and bounds.

One acquaintance of mine has embraced Communism and is actively engaged in spreading the faith among Western farmers. Another is studying economics and finance with the passion of a zealot. Others are writing novels of college life and magazine articles like this. Most of us are finding avocations of one sort or another, even if only contract bridge, auction sales, jigsaw puzzles or ping-pong. But to give a man an avocation when he wants a vocation is very much like Marie Antoinette's reputed offer of cake to the starving populace of Paris who cried for bread.

The truth of the matter is that only now is the Law of Diminishing Returns beginning to be applied to a college education. An older generation decided that a college education was a good thing and so, with true American zeal, millions of their sons and daughters went to college and attempted to capitalize on the fact that they might thenceforth be labelled "educated." Textbooks on economics illustrate the Law of Diminishing Returns by explaining that the fifth orange is not nearly so enjoyable, hence not so valuable, to the hungry man as the first orange. The college graduate is now the fifth orange so far as the hungry world is concerned. He is one of millions who has achieved a certain superficial standard of living which prohibits him from doing any but white-collar work; and even then he expects a fairly decent job which he may label "one with a future." It is difficult for him to realize that he and most of his kind are a drug on the market, particularly today.

I have no quarrel with the professional sages who say to us, "Young man, the lack of employment is in reality a splendid opportunity for you to read the great books of the world, to study history and economics in order to discover the meaning of our civilization." I may cover my head up with the bed clothes, or I may even stuff my ears with cotton, but I shan't quarrel about it. It's excellent advice in spite of the frequency and pompousness with which it is usually delivered.

The unfortunate thing is that the average college graduate is not even remotely qualified to follow it, any more than the average layman is qualified to study pure science as exemplified by such conclusions as Einstein's theory of relativity. We have been given no basis for any fundamental evaluation, nor are we capable of passing any judgment that is not tinged by some thought of personal gain. We have no basis for judging the relative merits of a capitalistic system as contrasted with a Socialistic or Communistic system. The best that we can hope to do on the basis of our education is to make the best of a bad bargain. Our education as well as our background has been too much one of materialism and utilitarianism to permit us to indulge in an impersonal and abstract contemplation of the world around us.

II

Many years ago Matthew Arnold wrote an essay contrasting the points of view of Hebraism and Hellenism. He defined Hebraism as a philosophy of act, of doing, and Hellenism as knowing, or being. We of our generation have been completely saturated with the spirit of Hebraism and are given to scoffing at the Hellenists for their futility. Even before we get to college we observe that our parents are imbued with the idea of getting ahead. They may be subtle about it, or they may not even know it themselves, but they are vitally concerned with their own infinitesimal jobs, as I suppose they must be. But in their concern they usually tend to overlook the rest of life and narrow themselves into a groove so that they can conceive of international commerce only in terms of a tariff on shoes, sugar, or some specific object to their own immediate interest.

One would suppose that the chief interest in a college would be the dissemination of an outlook which would deal with the whole of life, with some sort of conception of mankind in the abstract and perhaps even with some speculation as to the fundamental meanings of all existence. But, strangely enough, the attempt to approach any such abstract attitude toward life is very rare. We, as a class, tend to be practical and to embrace what Ruskin calls the idols of the market-place: that is perhaps why we decided on college training rather than on individual study and reading. When the Freshman arrives in college, he is usually invited to attend a reception for the members of his class, which is addressed by upperclassmen who have made themselves prominent on the campus. They are looked up to for having "done something in college": they have achieved the managership of the basketball team, the editorship of a paper, or the Sachemhood of the local Tammany Hall. These men are most conspicuous around the college, and it is only natural that they should attract the attention and emulation of the Freshmen more than the upperclassman who has learned to like books and is given to reading and browsing rather than to bustling about looking important.

At first glance it would seem as though the learned professors would tend to imbue in a man the love of books, the idea of being rather than doing. But the teachers, like this new leisure class, are a motley crew numbering in their ranks potential college presidents and advertising managers, as well as a full quota of pseudo-intellectual hoboes. Most of them are so busy chasing further degrees that they have little time for contemplation and unprejudiced thought until they reach a ripe old age. Some teach because they like the long summer vacations; some teach because it can be a comparatively easy life; some teach because they are incapable of coping with the world; and a few teach because they love teaching as a profession and feel that they have something to give.

Thus, we have the jigsaw-puzzle picture of scholars busied in attaining managerships of student activities, perfecting their poker or bridge games and learning to drink and kill time, exposed to instructors whose primary concern is the achieving of a department headship or of passing their lives in a comparatively leisurely existence. This is somewhat exaggerated, but very seldom is there a Platonic comradeship of thinker and disciple in the American system of education. How rare are the evenings when one sits and smokes and talks with a man who believes that the function of education is the dissemination of ideas rather than the memorizing of assigned data. How seldom does one ever achieve the warm impersonality of an intellectual discussion freed from the bondage of "trying to get somewhere." The failure of American education is that we cannot learn to love knowledge without thinking in the back of our minds that it may some day be capitalized.

This new leisure class that I speak of has never been able to attain a social consciousness, nor do I see great hope that it ever will. We are all potential capitalists and our present rebuffs, we feel, are due only to the business cycle. We are incapable of judging of the necessity for a business cycle in a society as complex as that which we will eventually enter. Our educations and our background are such that we tend to accept the *status quo* and make the best of it rather than to attempt any disinterested evaluation of it. This year several hundred thousand more will be added to the new leisure class and our position as the fifth orange will probably become even more acute. At any rate, it will be easier to find a fourth for bridge.

I COVER THE "WATER FRONT"

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 2)

White ribbon, white ribbon, white ribbon!
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!
Prohibition! Prohibition! Prohibition!

The cheer drove me to a beer in a convenient tavern. There I found the girl reporter whom the city editor had assigned to help cover the convention. She had just come from interviewing the national leader of the young people's branch of the W. C. T. U., Miss Helen Louise Byrnes, of Evanston, Ill.

"What," the G. R. had asked Miss Byrnes, "should a young girl, who doesn't believe in liquor, but who still desires to remain popular, say in reply to an invitation to a drink?"

Three answers approved by the W. C. T. U. and used with effect, according to Miss Byrne, are these:

1. "My Christian principles lead me to believe that Christian young men and women will not debauch their bodies by these things that harm them."

2. "Please take me home. This isn't my crowd. If you think you must drink, you will have a better time without me, and hereafter I will seek my friends among those who do not need to drink to have a good time."

3. "Alcohol has meant ruination to the social order and social structure of our nation, and I believe we are better off without it. Therefore I have pledged myself to total abstinence."

The girl reporter was in a fine stew as she downed her beer and lighted a cigarette. Upon leaving, the good lady had put her hand on the girl reporter's wrist and soulfully said: "You look like a good, dear, sweet girl to me. When I get back to the hotel tonight I am going to pray that you are never placed in the temptation to take a glass of beer!"

III

Gala events were scheduled on the program during the week of the convention. One of these celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of *The Union Signal*, official organ of the organization, and did honor to Miss Julia F. Deane, about to retire after twenty years as managing editor of the publication. A little wisp of a woman, white of hair, she stood on the stage in a gold cape and crown. Behind her in a semi-circle stood her staff assistants, also in gold capes and crowns. One of them read:

"Being of a retiring nature, it seems Miss Deane's wish to be remembered chiefly through the publication which has been so much a part of herself. *The Union Signal* has long been a most welcome visitor in lands across the sea, where real information concerning the progress of prohibition in the United States is eagerly sought by those who hope to make their countries dry. To many thinkers in those lands—lawyers, teachers and students, both men and women—the wonderful personality of Miss Deane through this, 'the world's greatest temperance journal,' has brought information that is helpful and inspiring."

At the close of the ceremony a young girl in white was invested with a golden cape and it was announced: "As the personification of *The Union Signal* we send her forth like a benediction to carry the message of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union for years to come!"

Applause followed and the delegates burst into a cheer:

White ribbon, white ribbon, white ribbon!
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!
Deane! Deane! Deane!
We thank you, we thank you, we thank you!
We love you, we love you, we love you!

As a climax to the convention a resolution was adopted naming a national day of prayer for the defeat of repeal:

"Recognizing the supreme power of prayer, the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union calls upon its members throughout the country and also appeals to all churches and all Christian people, to observe Sunday as a day of fasting and prayer for dry victories in the states that are to vote this summer on the repeal of the eighteenth amendment."

IV

Bits of profound learning linger in my mind now that the flurry of the convention is over:

"Of all the forms in which alcoholic beverages may be consumed, the cocktail has the quickest toxic or poisonous effect," said Bertha R. Palmer, Boston, of the National Temperance Federation, in a paper entitled "What Science Says About Beverage Alcohol."

"Beverage alcohol," Scientist Palmer continued, "is one of the family of alcohol, two of which are familiar to the public, methyl or wood alcohol, ethyl or beverage alcohol. Of these two in single drinks, ethyl is more poisonous, although the result of a dose, depressing the nervous system, is less perceptible than that of methyl, which ruins the eye-sight."

"America cannot drink her way to prosperity!" was the astute observation of Bishop H. Lester Smith of the Cincinnati area of the Methodist Episcopal church.

"I do not want to be quoted as saying that prohibition has done away with drunkenness," Mrs. Ida B. Wise Smith stated in a rare burst of acumen.

"Do what you will, you cannot repeal the effects of alcohol!" proclaimed President Boole.

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ECLIPSE OF DINNER

(Continued from Page 2, Col. 3)

became a temple of gastronomy, and the cook's single and lofty pride. The butler—almost one of the family after generations in its employ—and his staff, whether miniature or elaborate, served in the capacity of the cook's cavalry, at least as regards the chief function of the cook's artistry, to wit, the dinner. Both cook and butler were collaborators toward this peak of the day. But nowatimes it is a rare household in which the butler has been on the scene for even five years or the cook two. The discontent and itch for advancement, for improvement of both social and financial status, that have seized upon a nervous and uncertain democratic people have not overlooked household servants—even such cooks and butlers and other employés as in another day were wont to remain happily settled in their old and natural positions.

As a consequence, there is change after change. Cooks are supplanted by cooks, other servants by other servants. And dinner at any one house in a period of so little as even two years takes on successively various astonishing mutations and puzzling complexions. There ceases to be dinner in the single, fine tradition: the blossoming of years of household solicitude, nurture, and profound table respect. Go to any such house at four distinct intervals in the two years and the four dinners will be as violative of one another as four dinners in, respectively, a hotel palm-court, a German beer restaurant, a chop suey parlor and one of the more recherché delicatessens. When, in the period between 1890-1910, say, one went to a house to dine, one knew, from happy experience, the general aspect, contour and flavor of the dinner beforehand, and awaited the event with mouth-moist anticipation. When one goes to a house for dinner in these years—even as frequently as once a month—one hasn't the faintest idea of what the table may reveal.

Adding to the discomfiture of the present-day American dinner is the prevailing notion that, above everything else, it must be a very gay affair. The average host or hostess is infinitely less concerned with the success of the dinner itself than with the success of the dinner party. Food, together with its preparation and service, is regarded as being of very much less importance than the persons invited to partake of it. If the guests are known to be jolly souls, with here and there amongst them one or two who are sufficiently apt at facetiæ, the dinner itself becomes a matter of secondary consideration. Even an occasional meritorious dinner is invalidated by the general desire to convert it into a vaudeville show. A dinner is something to be quietly eaten and appreciated, not something to serve merely as an excuse for loud consultations on bridge technique and colloquies on the gracefulness of the rhumba.

Then, too, there has come into being a second notion that a dinner, however admirable, is not in itself sufficient unto the evening. It is accordingly rushed into nothingness in order to fit it into the time schedule of a theatre party, a dance (with the orchestra tuning up at ten o'clock, just as the dinner should be eas ly approaching the salad), a bridge or backgammon fiesta, the introduction of a parlor magician and a dog that can count up to twelve, or something of the sort. Thus, dinner is not more than half way through when the host or hostess, along with the servants and the guests, begin to display such evidences of nervousness to get it over with in time that not only does indigestion wait upon appetite but one can barely distinguish, so pell-mell is the service, between the roast and the dessert. I do not exaggerate, as many another dinner guest will testify, when I point out that it is a rare evening coat that comes away from a dinner table in these days, because of the absurd rush on the part of the service, without at least two mushrooms and a couple of gobs of whipped cream on its shoulders.

The American dinner table has much to learn from the French and German tables. In the way of what is, or should be, on the table proper, it needs many, many lessons. But it needs even more as regards the leisure and peace and tranquillity of those assembled around it.

O PROFITEERS!

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 1)

It is not my function here to advocate panaceas. I content myself with pointing out some of the implications of the admitted facts. It is useless to unveil the mysteries of business morality, when everybody is privately aware of them. It is even more useless, it is definitely hypocritical, to profess horrified alarm at what has been uncovered—the commonplaces of everyday commercial life—when the only alternative is a system of government, an economic order, which is repugnant to the overwhelming majority of the American people. The position of persons who live in glass houses throwing stones is proverbially ridiculous. So long as the people of this country live in little glass houses of capitalism, they will throw only pebbles at the big glass houses of their shrewder fellow-citizens. Let us not mistake these pebbles for bombs. They are not intended to smash anything so thoroughly after the American heart, so completely in accord with the national philosophy, as the system of production for profit.

REQUIRED READING

"But in truth it was a heroic decade, that of 1918 to 1928 in Paris . . . when Rimbaud and Lautrèmont [sic] were first discovered; when Gide's 'Faux-Monnayeurs' and Proust's epic first appeared."—Matthew Josephson in *The Saturday Review of Literature.*

Required reading: Arthur Rimbaud: Une Saison en Enfer, Brussels, 1873; Les Illuminations. Paris, 1886; Le Reliquaire. Paris, 1891; Oeuvres de Jean-Arthur Rimbaud. Paris, 1898; Lettres de Jean-Arthur Rimbaud. Paris, 1899; Oeuvres de Arthur Rimbaud: Vers et Proses. Paris, 1916. *See also:* Paul Verlaine: Les Poètes Maudits. Paris, 1884; George Moore: Impressions and Opinions. London, 1891; Remy de Gourmont: Le Livre des Masques. Paris, 1896; Adolphe Retté: Aspects. Paris, 1897; Stéphane Mallarmé: Divagations. Paris, 1897; Arthur Symons: The Symbolist Movement in Literature. London, 1899; André Beaunier: La Poèsie Nouvelle. Paris, 1902; Ernest Delahaye: Rimbaud. Paris, 1906; Paterne Berrichon: La Vie de Jean-Arthur Rimbaud. Paris, 1897; Paterne Berrichon: Jean-Arthur Rimbaud le Poète. Paris, 1912, etc. etc. etc. *Also:* Files of all leading Paris literary reviews between 1898 and 1914. Le Comte de Lautréamont: Les Chants de Maldoror. Brussels, 1874; Remy de Gourmont: Le Livre des Masques. Paris, 1896. Marcel Proust: Du Côté de chez Swann. Paris, 1913; Paul Souday: Les Livres du Temps. Paris, 1914; Lucient Daudet: Le Figaro. Nov. 23, 1913; Henri Ghéon: La Nouvelle Revue Française. Jan. 1, 1914; etc etc., etc.

BEAUX ARTS MAN

by ELEANOR KINSELLA McDONNELL

I RENEWED acquaintance lately with a young man at the Café des Deux Magots. Slightly spiffed and greatly bored, he was celebrating the second anniversary of his arrival in Paris. I had first met him in New York where he was studying architecture and I had heard him spoken of as one with fresh ideas and of certain promise. His teachers expected big things of him; he expected big things of himself.

Yes, he *had* graduated, he told me, after he had asked and received permission to sit a while at my table and pull himself together with some of that black brew called by the French *café nature.*

Yes, he had graduated and he had looked for work. Like all the others he hadn't found it. After several depressing months of unrewarded effort he had gone to see a leading metropolitan architect, one of the big shots in the profession, noted for his kindness in helping along young men of promise. The Big Shot was not big enough then—no one was—to be able to give any work; he gave advice instead. This is what he said:

"As the de-urbanization wave grows stronger, we achitects shall have to change our ideas a bit. All the skyscrapers and large apartment houses and hotels we are going to need, for some time to come, are already built—and more than half empty.

"Homes will always be built, but that fact will not help the young native architect, even if he's a genius. People with enough money to build houses better than match-boxes want a designer with a Beaux Arts reputation. That form of snobbery, I'm sorry to tell you, is rampant among us, especially among the women; and it's they who give the contracts when it comes to homes.

"If I were you I'd go to Paris for four years. You're much too young to inspire confidence, anyway. Grow a beard! Come back a Beaux Arts man! Then, I'll probably be able to help you."

The boy's father saw the point at once. Having supported his son for twenty-three years, he agreed to find the cash for four or five years more. The young man came to Paris and made application at once for entry to the École des Beaux Arts.

An alarming number of other young men had had the same idea. Entrance was not easy even for one who had graduated with honors at America's leading architectural school. Influence rather than merit seemed the lubricant necessary for greasing the ways. Quite a bit of money was essential. Regardless of whether one needed them or not, lessons were expected to be taken from a Beaux Arts teacher before one confronted the exams.

My young friend enrolled with a professor who had the reputation of getting his pupils in. What he was asked to study appalled him. Dead wood And nothing else. He would never need it. It was, he said, like studying Latin in the hope of doing business in Rome with modern Italians. Culturally it might be delightful to have the Latin, but if that was all he had he might as well be tongue-tied.

The lessons were expensive. It was a racket, like any other.

Months went by. When not studying he strolled around Paris. What were the French of today doing in the way of new building? From the exterior they were doing very little that was new, and that little, plus much more, had already been done in America, Germany and Austria.

There were, of course, no *gratte-ciels,* but there were a number of new constructions rather taller than the old *immeubles* of Paris. They had modernity of appearance, but no distinction. He was told to go out and look at the Rue Mallet-Stevens and also at a block of new studios near the Parc Montsouris.

He found them the banal reinforced concrete hybrids that looked as though they had been sired by a Moroccan desert shelter out of a Los Angeles super-garage. Though only a few years old they hadn't worn very well. Jerry-built, with an aspect of abandoned Hollywood sets, some were cracked and all were weather-beaten.

Nor was the new American Embassy, although it offered a problem to its architect in that he had to copy an ancient exterior and marry it to the modern interior demanded by American diplomats abroad, interesting architecturally.

The Place de la Concorde is a *site classé* by the government. New construction on an historic site must conform to the spirit of its age and must be approved by the French official experts. It has been whispered that when the United States bought the property next to the Hotel Crillon they were unaware of what was in store for them. At any rate it was ordained that the new building must balance the Crillon even as the Rothschild mansion balances the Ministry of Marine and that, however unrestrainedly the Americans might let themselves go on the inside of their new Embassy, its exterior must, down to the last architectural curlicue, be an exact duplicate of what the Rothschilds, generations ago, had deemed worthy of housing the illustrious family. Any impulse the American designer felt to let himself go in a big way had to be sublimated.

My young friend inclines to the opinion that the French played a trick on us because, strictly speaking, the American plot is not on the Place de la Concorde; it's on the Avenue Gabriel. And the old building which was torn down to make way for the Embassy had no similarity whatever to the Rothschild home.

II

At any rate, transferring his attention from exteriors to interiors, the American student now began looking inside some of the new French buildings. He rubbed his eyes in astonishment. *Chauffage central,* grandly advertised, consisted in almost every case of disfiguring radiators of the pre-war type—the kind that leak and ruin the wall-paper; even so, they were given ornamental pride of place in the rooms. Almost a complete absence of cupboards and closets. A builder told him that the Paris architects had an agreement with the furniture dealers not to plan deep closets. In this way the great expensive *armoires* could still be sold, with the architects drawing a commission on the sale. This, he decided, was one of those revelations which are often true in France but require too much credulity of the foreigner for instant belief.

In the bathroom of one expensive apartment, not six months old, he counted eleven exposed pipes; it occurred to him as funny that the French word for plumbing should be *couverture,* when practically nothing about it is covered.

Diffidently he mentioned the question of plumbing to his teacher. The old boy exploded. "Plumbing! Plumbing! You Americans think of nothing else! *Nous autres, Français, nous considerons d'abord la forme—la beauté!*"

Tact kept the young man from advancing the subject of the new building in the Paris suburbs. He never opened his mouth about the ghastly little monstrosities which line the route all the way from the city's fortifications to the lovely Valley of the Chevreuse. Where were all the æsthetes interested in *la forme* and *la beauté* when that mushroom growth of unspeakable villas and hutments was perpetrated, was a question he didn't ask. Entrance to the Beaux Arts depended on the good will of this gray-beard.

Ultimately such tact was rewarded. He acquired the necessary impedimenta of dead wood to get by the examiners; he became a student at the Beaux Arts.

With this achievement to his credit he decided to present a letter of introduction to a Paris architect, sent to him by one of his professors in New York.

The Frenchman read the letter and threw his hands in the air. "My God!" he cried, "another one of you! Why do you come here to study architecture? Over here we have not yet learned that architecture and engineering are blood-brothers. Chartres! The Louvre! The Château of Versailles! Beautiful, yes! But they did not have to heat them, or put in plumbing or elevators! Listen! When Soviet Russia wanted architects, engineers, did they come to Paris? When Japan wanted a great new hotel for Tokio did she go down in the Rue Bonaparte and pick a man from the École des Beaux Arts? No, they went to New York, to Chicago. We can give beauty, yes—or we could. But if you want beauty plus, you must go elsewhere. I, myself, a Frenchman, say it! I myself am just back from America where I have studied the science of air-conditioning. And now, I shall tell you another thing. Everything that I know about architecture I learned ten years ago. Where? At Columbia!"

Gloomily the young man ordered an *Armagnac* as he told me this. He will soon, he revealed, begin growing his beard. Adding another three years to his age will however take longer and be more boresome. At twenty-eight he will not yet have built a dog-house. But he will be a Beaux Arts man.

MAGAZINE FICTION

by ERIC HOWARD

THERE are three kinds of magazine fiction—pulp, slick and quality. It is often difficult to discover any difference, but those esoteric fellows, the editors, are able to spot it at a glance.

After writing reams of pulp stuff, a ream or two of slick, and less than a ream of quality fiction, I am prepared to give to the world certain definitive conclusions. The differences between pulp and slick fiction, slick and quality fiction, are differences of degree, not of kind. The differences may be expressed in these few words: from the obvious to the obscure.

Consider a favorite theme of fiction and the manner in which it would be developed for the different publications.

A poor old man is on his deathbed. His enemies have persecuted him and his only child, a daughter.

Pulp treatment: The old man is brave, noble, righteous. His daughter—what a gal!—is beautiful, loyal, brave, sweet; Everyman's Heroine. Enter the Hero! What, have these evildoers brought my old friend to this pass? They have, eh? I shall smite them. Inspired by the light in the girl's eyes, the hero proceeds to smite the old man's enemies (and when I say smite, I mean *smite.*) Not without a good deal of trouble, danger and difficulty, he smites them right and left, with undiminished courage and determination. In doing so, he probably rescues the girl from their clutches one or two times, inspires the feeble old man with a desire to live, and no doubt gets him up off the deathbed to dance a jig before the story ends.

Also, if one wishes to give the customers their money's worth, it will be well to have the heroine rescue the hero at least once. This will prove that she's the proper mate for such a mighty smiter. The characters will be too busy, during the story, to think about love, sex, their repressions or inhibitions. But at the end, love will express itself in a strong, but chaste, embrace, which clearly implies that wedding bells will ring out in the near future.

As anyone can see, such a story does what it sets out to do. It provides the readers with a hero and a heroine to be admired; it emphasizes the knightly virtue of courage; and it contains so much action that its readers are protected from the pain of thought as they follow the movements of the characters.

Slick treatment: The old man is not so poor. In fact, he was quite prosperous before the Crash. And his daughter isn't the sweet, gentle, noble creature of the pulp tale. Instead, she's a very modern girl, with a snappy line, a restless disposition, a mob of admirers, and an interest in sex. However, one senses that underneath it all she's the dear, sweet child her mother hoped she would be. Before he dies, the old man wants to see her engaged to a splendid young chap of his choice. But the girl can't see this fellow; she is captivated by a visiting English playwright (or French, or German, or Scandinavian) who can recite Freud backwards and who is not immoral, but amoral. This gent, of course, lacks the sterling qualities of the other man; he's a foreigner and a worker in the arts and he probably has some illegitimate children somewhere. Not that bastards are to be mentioned in a slick story.

Well, nothing much happens, but the girl goes out with the amoral gent and he rather shocks her with his advances. (This must be handled "delicately", the editors tell us.) She returns home to find her father dramatically sicker. And with him is the sterling young man, who rebukes her for leaving papa. There at the bedside, when her heart is touched by her father's condition, she comes to a realization of the sterling worth of the young man. That fine, brave, sincere, sweet girl (sister to the heroine of the pulp yarn) at last peeps through the veneer of modern sophistication, and the sterling young man embraces her. His first kiss reveals to her the depth of her love for him, and all is well. The old man dies peacefully and painlessly (it isn't advisable to put much pain into a slick tale), for his dearest wish has been granted him.

Quality treatment: The old man is dying of alcoholic and sexual excesses. He's been a gay dog in his day, and he is unrepentant. His daughter is an over-sexed wench, perhaps not quite heterosexual, now resident in Greenwich Village or Paris. The old man doesn't want her to be notified of his illness. She has no use for him, and he has less for her. He wants to die alone. But an officious doctor informs the daughter of his condition, and the old man worries himself into a coma, dreading her arrival. She reminds him of her mother, the only woman he never loved and the only one who managed to trap him into matrimony. In his coma he greatly enjoys himself, for he recalls all of the luscious females he has known. (This gives one a chance to do some swell work with the stream-of-consciousness, or unconsciousness, method. It can be as obscure as you like, for if it's a quality story, readers will be sure to find in it hidden meanings of deep significance; and O'Brien will give it three stars in his anthology.) When he comes to, he's happy. He's had a grand time. Then he remembers that his daughter is coming. "Has she come yet?" he asks. "Not yet," he is told. "Thank God!" he murmurs, and dies happily. As a matter of fact, the girl wasn't coming at all. The old man might have been spared his worry.

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The procession of days from the first fatal seven to the final thousand years . . . man in a middle tempest fighting up to God or going down to voluntary crumble in the blackness of mere clay . . . those white in the Faith and those scarlet in disbelief . . . the wooing of Jesus and the seductions of the Devil who creeps on black belly bearing psychoanalysis in one hand and Communism in the other . . . the Church made bodily manifest in those who believe . . . the hour when the persons of the faithful shall be swept up to heaven twelve miles into the sky, while they of little faith or none remain astonished . . . the Jews becoming witness and the Gentiles doomed to carry the Mark of the Beast on brow and palm till God shall extinguish their lives—all this vast tapestry he unrolls whenever he thinks I will stay long enough to hear him out. And I marvel at the dramatic geniuses who for centuries have embellished and erased, refined and expanded, retouched and re-worked, till this deep cry of human helplessness is complete in its pitiful sublimity, like a blind angel at the precipice of Time."

—Sulamith Ish Kishor.

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